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ABSTRACT

This brief paper summarizes a full length report of the same title on the faculty job satisfaction of women and minorities. In light of probable faculty shortages in the coming decades and the need for increasingly diverse college faculty, institutions must make faculty positions attractive to women and minorities. Current trends, low faculty salaries, few women and minorities in the education pipeline, and low current job satisfaction suggest an impending shortage of willing and able women and minority candidates. Stressors affecting women and minority faculty members include internal, workplace and lifestyle factors. In general women faculty members are less satisfied with their positions than their male counterparts. They represent a small percentage of the faculty cohort, make lower salaries, are found in the lower professional ranks, are often employed part-time, represent disciplines typically reserved for females, work in less prestigious institutions, feel their supervisors do not value their input, and are not tenured. Minority faculty, when compared to white counterparts, are less likely to be tenured, are concentrated in the lower ranks, are concerned about low salaries, feel isolated and unsupported, and often encounter prejudice and discrimination. Solutions to the job satisfaction problems for women and minorities must include a variety of recruiting and retention strategies. (Contains 7 references.) (JB)

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Faculty Job Satisfaction: Women and Minorities in Peril

Martha W. Tack and Carol L. Patitu

Until relatively recently, most research about job satisfaction was completed in the industrial sector, with attempts often made to adapt findings to higher education. Given the impending shortage of prospective faculty to fill the numerous vacancies that will exist by 2000, the topics of job satisfaction for faculty, recruitment, and retention must be given priority attention. Further, the faculty of the future must reflect the diversity of the population to be served by colleges and universities; consequently, immediate actions must be taken to ensure that the faculty position is attractive to women and minorities alike.

Who Will Fill Future Faculty Positions in Colleges and Universities?

Beginning in 2000 and continuing for several decades, a serious shortage will exist of persons to fill vacant faculty positions, with women and minorities clearly underrepresented in a variety of disciplines. Only a few minorities are now in the academic pipeline, and women and minorities who complete the doctorate often choose other occupations because they do not view the faculty position as a viable career choice. Clearly, salaries lag behind those offered by other professions, the faculty position does not command the revered status it once did, and many current faculty are dissatisfied with their choice of career. Unquestionably, such problems will dramatically affect the ability of colleges and universities to attract, nurture, develop, and retain women and minority faculty (Jones and Nowotny 1990). Consequently, institutional officials and current faculty in higher education must recognize the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among faculty and eliminate them; conversely, they must recognize the factors that increase job satisfaction and enhance them.

What Are Some of the Stressors that Affect Women and Minority Faculty Members?

Internal stressors on faculty include achievement and recognition for achievement, autonomy, growth and development, the quality of students, the reputation of the institution and one's colleagues, responsibility, the interaction between students and teachers and its effect on students' learning, and the work itself. Factors in the workplace that prevent job dissatisfaction describe relationships to the context or environment in which individuals work, representing such variables as interpersonal relationships, salary, tenure, policies and administration, rank, supervision, working conditions, the "fit" between the faculty role and the person involved, and collective bargaining. Life-style stressors usually have a more dramatic effect on women than men because of societal norms about the priority women should place on their families. The list of life-style stressors is enormous but includes such items as child care, elder care, and physical as well as mental health; in addition, demands from the family and household, such as marriage and children, dual-career/commuting marriages, and domestic responsibilities, dramatically affect the satisfaction and productivity of women faculty.

Are Women Disgruntled with Their Faculty Positions?

Women faculty members are less satisfied with their positions than their male counterparts. Today, women represent a small percentage of the faculty cohort, make lower salaries than their male colleagues, are found in the lower professorial ranks, are often employed in part-time rather than full-time positions, represent disciplines typically reserved for females, work in less prestigious institutions, feel that their supervisors do not value their input, and are not tenured.

It also appears that women enjoy and engage in teaching more often than research; interestingly, women must handle heavier teaching loads, a limitless number of student advisees, and more than their fair share of committee assignments while trying to carve out sufficient time for research and writing. In addition, women faculty have to prove themselves over and over again before they can be accepted by their colleagues and achieve recognition.

In addition to these issues, women are bombarded with life-style stressors that add unnecessary restrictions to their ability to achieve success in academe. In most instances, a woman faculty member gives up her own personal time to handle the demands associated with being a mother, wife, domestic servant, care giver for elderly parents, friend, colleague, author, invited speaker, researcher, teacher, committee member, and so on (Aisenberg and Harrington 1988). In effect, when a woman accepts a faculty position, she is really accepting a second or third job!

Clearly, if more women faculty are to be attracted to higher education and those who are currently employed are to remain, something must be done to enhance job satisfaction. Moreover, support services must

be in place to help women balance the often conflicting demands of work and life. Unless changes are made in the way faculty work is completed, in the rewards associated with the professoriat, and in the way institutions help people deal with personal obstacles, women faculty could indeed become an endangered species in most disciplines.

> The problem is more significant than simply bringing more women into the university. If we can solve the conflict between work and family, everyone will benefit and it is likely that more women will enter and stay in academe. The well-being of the university depends on its ability to recruit and retain a talented professorate. Our national well-being depends on our ability to develop a happy, emotionally healthy, and productive next generation (Hensel 1991, p. 79).

How Satisfied Are Minority Faculty with Their Faculty Positions?

When minority faculty are employed in institutions of higher education, some things are certain. When compared to their white counterparts, they are less likely to be tenured, are concentrated in the lower academic ranks, are often concerned about low salaries, feel isolated and unsupported at work, and often encounter prejudice, discrimination, and a continuing climate of racism. They are also often overburdened with student advising and counseling and institutional or community service. Unquestionably, these problems must be addressed if the number of minority faculty on college and university campuses is to increase (Silver, Dennis, and Spikes 1988).

Can Anything Be Done to Increase the Job Satisfaction, Recruitment, and Retention of Women and Minority Faculty?

Leaders and faculty in higher education must implement a variety of recruiting and retention strategies if a faculty representing a diverse culture is to become a reality. Conventional (or traditional) approaches must be combined with fresh, extraordinary strategies, and long-term and short-term plans are necessary. Planning must begin with the enrollment of minorities into undergraduate and graduate programs in decent numbers so they can eventually enter the pool for faculty positions; women must be attracted into disciplines where they are currently underrepresented. Institutions must include incentives for departments to diversify (for example, positions restricted to minority and women candidates, money to provide competitive salaries, and overt rewards for success). A variety of institutions have applied successful strategies.

Clearly, the way colleges and universities recruit, retain, and reward women and minority faculty must radically and immediately change. Only then will the talents of women and minority faculty be unleashed, and only then will higher education be appropriately equipped to respond to the needs of a constantly changing society.

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